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It's a new year, full of new possibilities! Regardless of what your 2020 was like – you made it – you are still here! Time to look forward and time to enjoy the longer daylight hours and milder weather. Covid is still an issue, so please stay safe, wear your mask, social distance when possible and wash your hands often. ALIVE Magazine appreciates our advertisers and our readers. We work hard to put together a quality publication and we are grateful to our readers and our sponsors. ENJOY!

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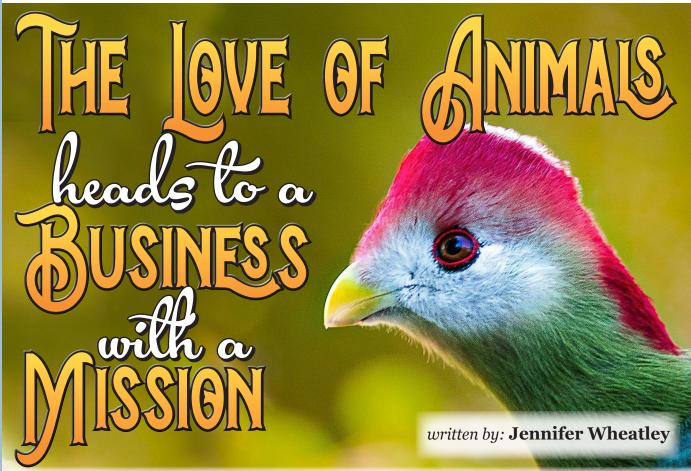
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Jared Baker's whole face lights up when he talks about Animal Tales, a professional live animal educational programming company that he founded. Baker is a staff officer at the USDA Forest Service's Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, where he oversees the business operations. He also serves as the US director for Animal Tales, which is now divided into two regions, the Southeast, including Louisiana, southern Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, and the

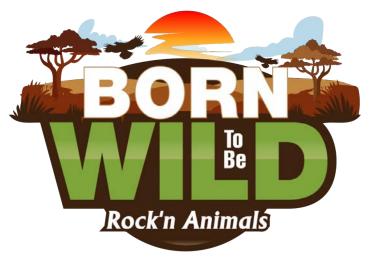
Mid-south, which is Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, northern Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The naturalists who present the animal shows will also travel outside these states for events. Speaking on the opening video of his website, Baker says an Animal Tales show is an opportunity to "get up close and personal" with the animals, noting that, unlike the naturalists, the creatures "don't have a script!"

Baker, who is from Graves County, Kentucky, began working with animals while still a student at Murray State University, where he rehabilitated birds of prey. He was studying wildlife and fisheries biology and then went on to receive a master's degree in environmental education. He was recruited by the Birmingham Zoo, where he served as Zoological Manager of Reptiles and the Children's Zoo. Baker went on to serve as the Cura-

tor of the Children's Zoo and to oversee a \$5.5 million expansion known as the Alabama Wilds. He received his MBA from Samford University while in Alabama.

His experience working with children would prove to be crucial to the philosophy which drives Animal Tales. He quickly learned that aiming an animal show at children, making sure they are engaged, leads to an overall positive experience for the whole family. It was family that caused Baker and his wife, Christy, to make the difficult decision to leave Birmingham. They wanted to raise their growing family, now three daughters, near their Kentucky grandparents.





Baker went to work at Land Between the Lakes in 2006, but a trip to Sea World and the San Antonio Zoo in 2009 rekindled his love of working with animals and his new company was born that year, but it was inspired by a memory. He says, "Every year in grade school there was a man named Scott Shupe that performed animal programs. It was, by far, my most anticipated assembly. I would go home and tell my parents that I wanted to be him when I grew up. After graduating, Scott hired me to do programming for him, fulfilling my dream as a young child. Nothing was more rewarding than having a huge audience of kids hanging on every word and eagerly waiting to see the next animal in the program."

The mission of Animal Tales is to educate, entertain and inspire through traveling animal shows utilizing trained naturalists. Every show is a chance for guests to interact with the animals, without a field trip or liability for the host. Traditional venues include schools, churches, libraries, birthday parties, vacation Bible schools, corporate gatherings and special events.

Available programming includes: BORN TO BE WILE: ROCK'N ANIMALS – This school assembly program focuses on why animals make so many different sounds and what they mean.

CREEPY CRITTERS – Designed for the fall and its festivals, this show features arachnids, insects and snakes to illustrate the usefulness of the less than cuddly.





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CREATURES OF THE GALAXY – Exotic animals will arrive at your location to educate the crowd.

REPTILE SCALES AND TAILS – A large tortoise, lizards and snakes make up this school assembly and participants will get to interact with the reptiles.

ANIMAL SCIENCE CLASSIFICATION – Birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians or invertebrates? What do you want to learn about at your event?

Virtual programs are also available.

Jimmy Smith, a librarian who used Animal Tales, said the program delivered "great enthusiasm and

energy levels keeping the children excited and wanting to see more."

Given the large territory and variety of programming, several naturalists make up the Animal Tales team. Jeff Armstrong, Kingston Springs, Tennessee, directs the Mid-south division. He previously owned an educational outreach company focused on alpacas. Celia Armstrong, who is Jeff's wife, has over 20 years elementary classroom experience. She ensures that Animal Tales meets state educational standards.

John Ham, who directs the Southeast division, is also a former employee of the Birmingham Zoo. He has also worked for Reptiland and traveled with their exhibits throughout the US and Canada.

Vicky Arvelo, a native of Venezuela, has a degree in marine biology from the University of West Florida. She is fluent in English, Spanish and Italian.





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Cameron Morley is a student at the University of West Florida with a special interest in reptiles and snakes. He studies toxicology and herpetology to understand venom and its interactions with the human body. He plans to attend medical school.

Rachel Ham is a licensed clinical social worker who serves as a creative consultant to Animal Tales.

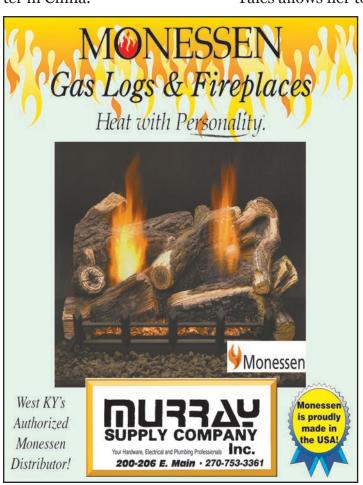
Zoe Bonerbo, who recently graduated from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, has worked with many species and had the opportunity to observe wildlife in Botswana and visit the Giant Panda Breeding Center in China.



Anna Garland works as an administrative assistant following time as the preschool coordinator for the Mayfield, Kentucky, YMCA.

Nicole Arnold is a special education and theater teacher with over 25 years experience. She is a frequent director of productions at Cheatham County Community Theater. Animal Tales allows her to combine her passions for education, animals and travel.

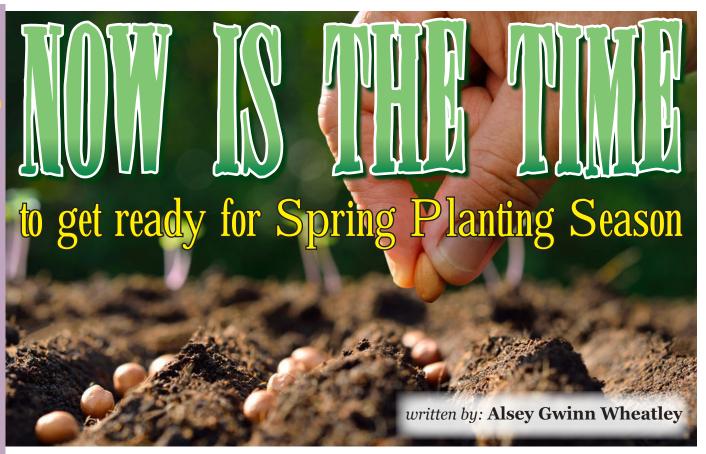
For more information, pricing or to book Animal Tales for your event, visit their website, www. animaledzoocation.com, find them on Facebook or call 800.589.5408. New animals and themes are added annually and holiday programs are available. Animal Tales is insured and licensed with USDA and Fish and Wildlife agencies.





Alive • Spring 2021





Spring is about to arrive, and that means gardeners are itching to get back outside and start getting their hands dirty again. With the threat of frost still in the air, many of us turn to indoor seed starting to get a jump on the season. This can-do attitude is a trait of all gardeners, but before you rush for the peat pots here are a few things to consider about the benefits of direct sowing your seeds instead.

When we talk about direct sowing seeds, what we mean is planting them directly into the garden. That means having to wait till after the last frost to get started, an irksome exercise in patience for many gardeners. When the threat of the cold has truly passed then it is a simple matter of seeding your garden plot and gently watering them in enough time to germinate. Your plants should come up just as quickly as they would indoors, but with a few added benefits for having started growing in their permanent home.

The seedlings gardeners start indoors seem to be larger than their directly sown brethren at first glance, and it makes sense that they would be





given they were started earlier. But being started indoors puts them at a non-insignificant risk of transplant shock. Every time a seedling is uppotted it takes time to grow accustomed to its new container and reestablish itself. This can stunt their growth and, depending on the amount of times it happens and how sensitive your seedlings are, can mean that any advantage of time gained from starting them indoors is lost. Direct sowing can also mitigate the threat of die off when hardening your seedlings before planting them out, which is always a discouraging event for a gardener to watch happen.

Then there is the matter of space and time constraints. Not all of us have a greenhouse or garden shed to start seeds in and, while the kitchen table will do in a pinch, your significant other is unlikely to appreciate eating breakfast among the melon vines or cucumber sprouts. For gardeners that don't have the room to spare, direct sowing is an option that should be taken advantage of. In addition to saving space, direct sowing will also save them time. Rare is the gardener who doesn't want to spend more time enjoying their garden than they do working in it. Direct sowing means that all the hours usually spent messing about with peat pots and seed starting mix can instead be spent watching your plants grow in peace. While you will still need to keep a close eye on your seedlings to protect them from insects and small animals, direct sowing can save gardeners significant time.

It can also save them money. Minor garden costs are to be expected, just like they would be in any

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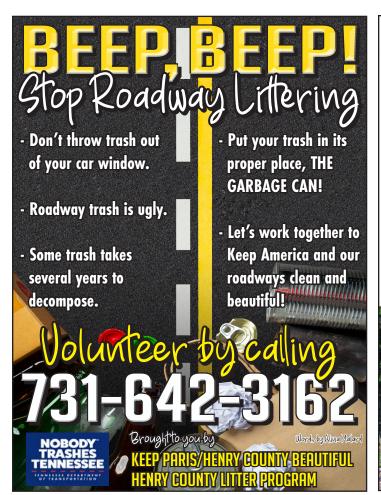
hobby. Seeds need to be replenished and garden plots top dressed with fertilizer and mulch. Certain things simply need to happen to keep a garden productive and well tended to. That doesn't mean that every cost is necessary. In Tennessee we have a relatively long growing season; starting seeds by direct sowing will still provide plenty of time to enjoy flowers and harvest fruits and vegetables. The money that a gardener would normally spend on seed starting, medium pots, trays, and grow lights could be more efficiently used in other places. For example, investing in a new set of gardening snips, purchasing a sprinkler that will mean you don't have to haul around your watering can, or perhaps even the addition of a comfortable bench to take in the surrounding beauty of your garden.

Starting seeds indoors is a fun way to get a jump on the spring planting season. That being said, it cannot be denied that direct sowing your seeds can be an attractive alternative to many gardeners. Whether you're looking to save a little money or just can't manage to find the amount of space you would otherwise need, planting seeds straight into the garden is an entirely valid way to start this year's planting season.











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Loria Plunk, the General Manager of the 2021 World's Biggest Fish Fry, is more than familiar with the job. She held the position in 2007, in 2016, and was scheduled to oversee Paris and Henry County's signature event in 2020, but that Fish Fry was not to be, and she is now preparing for 2021. This year, April 17 – 24, will no doubt be different than all of its predecessors, as the Paris-Henry County Jaycees, all of the volunteers, the community and the visitors figure out a festival post Covid.

The 2021 schedule is very similar to past years:

April 17 kicks off with a 5K run and the demolition derby that night.

April 19 is the street dance.

April 20 is the country dance.

April 21 is the opening of the fish tent at the Commercial Building at the Henry County Fairgrounds and the Christian concert, an event organized by Jim Twilbeck and the Western

District Baptist office.

April 22 will feature the fish tent and the arts and crafts vendors.

April 23 is the Grand Parade and fish tent will open at 11 am and close at 9 pm or when the last person is served. The rodeo will be featured that evening.

April 24 is the Small Fry Parade and the second night of the rodeo. The fish tent will again be open from 11 am til 9 pm.



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The rodeo, always a crowd favorite, has been altered from three nights to two. This year's event is the Championship Bulls and Barrels Showdown, presented by Parsons and Milam.

The fish tent is once again sponsored by Holley Credit Union. Plunk says the normal picnic tables will be replaced by tables and chairs, which can be arranged to accommodate social distancing and wiped down between diners. Plunk is concerned about the availability of work release assistance from the Henry County Sheriff's Office and would welcome volunteers to help at the fish tent.

One of the most treasured World's Biggest Fish Fry events is the hushpuppy toss from the Hostess Princess to her father before the first guest is served. The 2020 Fish Fry Royalty will keep their titles and serve this year, except the Hostess Princess, who is being replaced by first maid Victoria Owens. All the attending maids will move up one spot as well, creating a court of four rather than the traditional five.

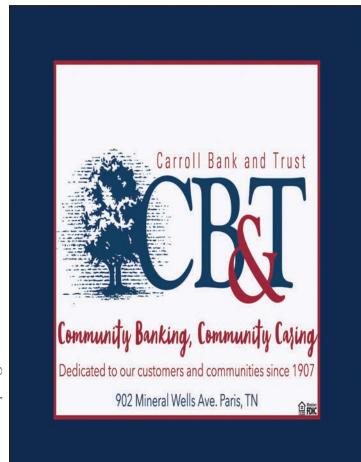
ing at the Henry County Fairgrounds, will also be spaced for visitor and vendor safety. Plunk says "We're going to do what we can to protect the people who attend." Masks and hand sanitizer will be available at multiple locations. The carnival rides will also be sanitized between guests.

The Arts and Crafts event, in the Enoch Build-

Despite some minor alterations, the major Fish Fry events will go on. Plunk says that as the 2021 event was being discussed the Jaycees realized "Fish Fry is not Fish Fry without all of it."

Working with other city and county leaders, the decision was made to have the WBFF, with the objective of "keeping everyone safe." She says community reaction has been overwhelmingly positive and "they can't wait!"

Plunk says the atmosphere at the 2021 meeting was completely different than in 2020, when "We knew what we had to do." What they had to

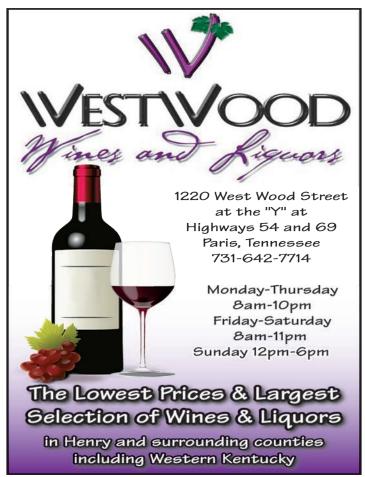


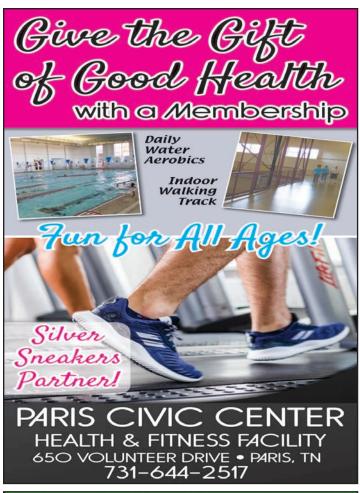














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do was cancel a beloved annual event, but Covid vaccines are available now and she says "We have hope now."

Plunk, who is the accounting manager at Arrowhead Home Sales in Paris, began as a Fish Fryette in 1983 and joined the Jaycees in 1990, when women were accepted into the membership. She is the only female member of that class still active in the group.

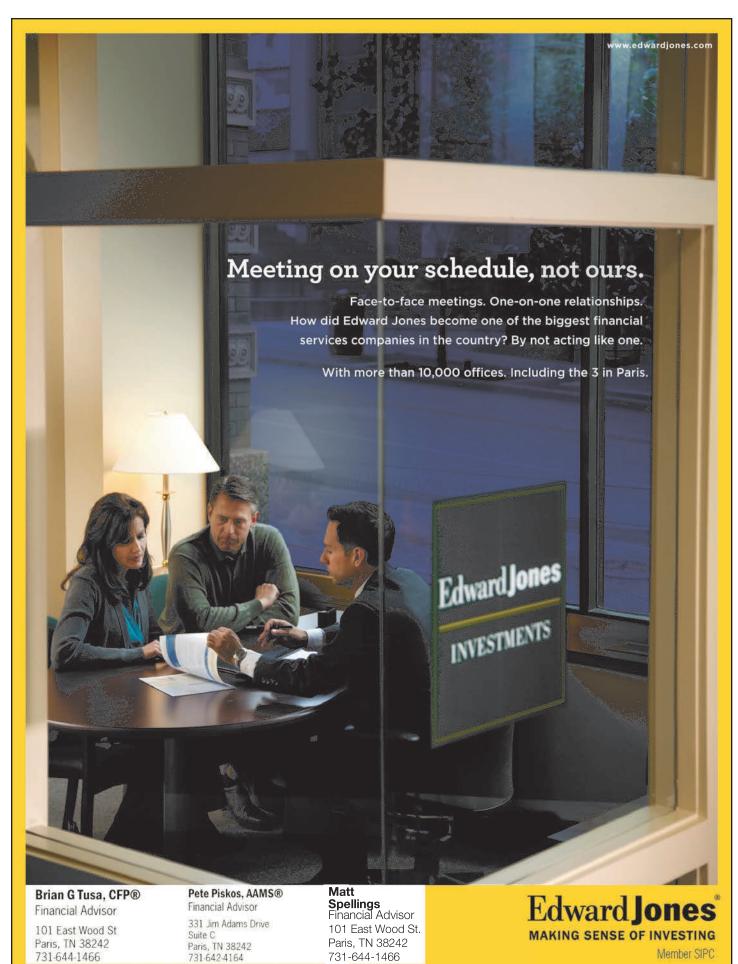
Her original task was to take up money at concession stands and then she moved on to the fish tent, where she ran a cash register, but her memories of her earliest jobs are a little different. She says the children of other Jaycees would come join her if they got bored or just needed some attention and their parents always knew she would keep an eye on the little ones. She also remembers being taught to tie trash bags in a particular way so they would not slide down into the cans.

All the years she has been with the Jaycees made the cancellation of the 2020 World's Biggest Fish Fry painful. She says it felt like "an arm had been cut off. It was very depressing to not have that time." The Jaycees are like family to her and Fish Fry is "like a busy family reunion." Not being with her fellow Jaycees was the first time since 1990 that she "went to work and was sitting at my desk on Fish Fry Friday."

This is 2021 and you can bet Loria Plunk will be in the thick of things, because the World's Biggest Fish Fry is back!







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Lots of things have changed over the past 60-plus years, but one thing has remained the same: the longing for spring, especially after a trying winter.

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Parents today still look out the window in mid-February and see the ice- and snow-covered landscape. But if the power stays on, then they can counter their children's "I'm bored" with "Let's download a new game for your tablet." Not so, back in the day.

Moms had to be very creative, and much like today's parents who may allow extra screen time to maintain their sanity, moms back then might have allowed a few pastimes that they ordinarily would eschew.

In our household, this nod to sanity took the form of rubber band fights. Elaine, the middle child, was a little too girly to want to participate, although she would have been welcomed. So it was left up to my brother, Matt, and I to have all the fun.

First, Matt would construct two forts at opposite corners of his 8X10 bedroom. Pillows, blankets, sheets, a chair or two, and anything else readily available could be used for construction.

Next, as the oldest, he would make sure we each had a wooden ruler with a notch at one of the short ends from which we could launch our projectiles: the heavy, brown rubber bands used in the produce department of the grocery store our dad managed. (It never occurred to us to question the fact that our dad, who was working during the day, made sure we were always stocked with a whole big box of rubber bands. Did this make him an accomplice in absentia to the mayhem?)

Finally, the rules were laid out, and they were simple. Being six years younger, I could hit Matt anywhere with a rubber band, including in the face, and he could not tell Mom (who of course knew what we were up to).

He could hit my body with a rubber band, but if he hit me in the face, then I could tell Mom. We would agree and then commence the battle.

Being older, he was a better and faster shot, but he had a definite handicap in that he could not complain. We would go at it for an hour or more at a time, but then I would get tired and invariably not duck fast enough – and I would get a rubber band to the face.

Of course, I would start crying, and Matt would talk me out of telling Mom. This would happen repeatedly, and I would eventually escape and present my tear-stained and battle-weary face to my mother, who had been listening to the laughs and then cries for the entire duration. (We had a very small house, unlike many of the homes today, so there was no escape for her.)



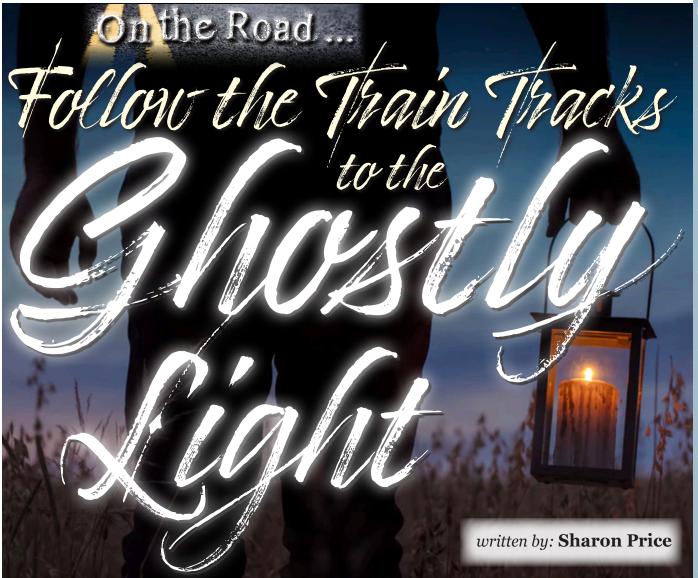












The story is told several different ways. As it happened many years ago, through the telling of it, facts have changed differing one story from another, from yet another. But one fact remains the same...a man died after being decapitated from being hit by a train in the area of Chapel Hill, Tennessee. Some say his name was Skip Adjent. According to some, he was a young

man while other people insist he was an old one at the time of his death. One tale tells of a passenger who took the train on a daily basis and somehow lost his life on the tracks, haunting the route of that train daily. Older stories tell us he appears as a train brakeman or a headless signalman, using his lantern to guide the way. Since





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from the day of his death, his lantern appears to illuminate above the railroad tracks where his life came to a sudden tragic end all those years ago.

One has to wonder at the true reason a man, whether young or old, would not hear the whistle of an oncoming train, or notice the thunderous pounding of the iron horse vibrating in the very rails Skip stood upon. What must he have been thinking, causing him to not step off of the railroad tracks before the mightly train was upon him? Was he perhaps too old to hear the train approaching, or too young to realize how swiftly the train would be upon his position? Or did he stand there knowing he was living his last moments in this Earthly life? We shall never know the truth behind the legend, for it remains just that...the legend of the Ghostly Light.

Whichever story is factual, one thing remains to be a 'truth'. The Chapel Hill Light is real. Many of us have grown up hearing the tale of the eerie light above the tracks in Chapel Hill, Tennessee. More than a few of us have gone to the spot, hoping to see the light in the sky above where the train travels. Some have even had watch parties at the site. People have come from

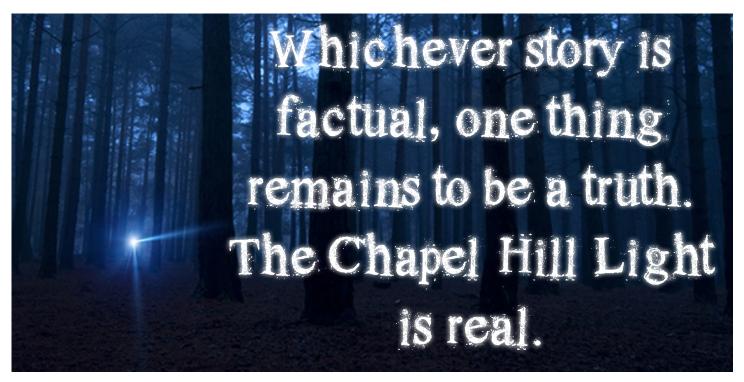
all over the area and beyond to hold midnight vigils or overnight watches, hoping to take a photograph of the ghostly spirit or get a picture of the lantern light in the sky above the tracks. Some people even brought guns along with them to shoot at the light, if seen. Rowdy crowds were oftentimes dangerous in their quest to see the ghost and the light, with one reported fatality due to the exuberance of a man from a nearby county. Enamored by the appearance of the light, he got too close to the railroad tracks and was, like Skip, hit by the train passing by at that time.

There are several schools of thought regarding the lantern light hovering in the Chapel Hill sky above the tracks. Some say it is evil...an omen belonging to a demonic ghostly presence, warning all to fear its origin. Other thought is it's a heavenly light marking the tragic passing of a soul. Several pictures have been successfully taken depicting a shadowy image of a headless man, while other photographs show just the light above the tracks.

Within the past several years, the town of Chapel Hill, Tennessee has substantially expanded. As a result, sightings of the ghost light have somewhat diminished,







perhaps because of residential or commercial growth in that particular area. Maybe the Chapel Hill ghost doesn't like neighbors. Or, perhaps he has moved on, finally making peace with his own death those many years ago. Or, perhaps he is biding his time, resting until the right moment to once again appear to his appointed waiting audience. We might ask ourselves... are we waiting on him? Or, is he waiting for us, anticipating a new generation's crowd of curious onlookers... another bunch of grisly, thrill-seeking innocents upon which he can feed?

This inviting area has been named one of the top haunted places in Tennessee, with several other stories of ghostly intent. The Victorian houses of Main Street also have ghostly tales to tell. Some striking, beautiful old homes are indeed, haunted. 'Mr. Meyers' was a veteran of the Civil War. Surviving the numerous



battles he was involved in, he built a house after the war in the year 1880 for he and his daughter...the only remaining member of his once-large family. His dear wife and four other children had not survived in the years of the conflict. He allegedly left his daughter alone in the house to attend a meeting with colleagues



ing daughter. There were no reports of an accident involving 'Mr. Meyers' and no reports of anyone ever seeing him alive again. Several residents throughout the years have reported a sighting of a young girl in the high widow's peak of the house, eyes searching for her beloved father to return to her. It is said that she becomes displeased if anyone lives in the house and will make herself known at times by running loudly up and down the spiral staircase.

in Gettysburg, PA. He never arrived in Gettysburg for

his meeting, nor did he ever return home to his wait-

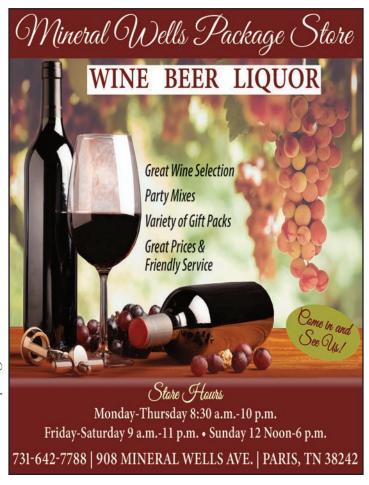
Yet another haunted building is reported to be Western House in a nearby area. Built as a hotel and saloon in its beginning, it has also been used as a restaurant, a bar, and even apartments. Throughout the years, patrons and residents say 'Christine' haunts the place. The daughter of the first owner, Christine acts much as a poltergeist as she mysteriously haunts the building, surprising people at inopportune times.

Spaulding Road Cemetery and Woods in the Concord area may not be a place you want to find yourself alone, especially after dark. Spaulding Cemetery was used between 1808 through 1941. A creekbed and a

few beautiful houses lie along the dirt pathway known as Spaulding Road. Once you go up the slight hill and step upon the cemetery grounds, people have reported hearing disembodied voices after the wind picks up noticeably in the quietness of the strange atmosphere of the place. And even more daunting might be the shadows darting back and forth in the deep woods surrounding the cemetery, should you be brave enough to look!

The Chapel Hill area also is home to 'Witch Woods'. A water well lies off an overgrown path. The well was constucted many decades past and has numerous strange and distressing markings on the inside of the well. Long ago sealed over, in this area it is said the temperature is noticeably colder.

If you're looking for ghosts, head to middle Tennessee. Southern Living Magazine has named Chapel Hill as one of the most haunted places in the country. Whether looking for the ghost of Skip Adjent and his lantern light above the railroad tracks, or 'Mr. Meyer's' daughter in the widow peak of her Victorian home on Main Street... you won't be disappointed.





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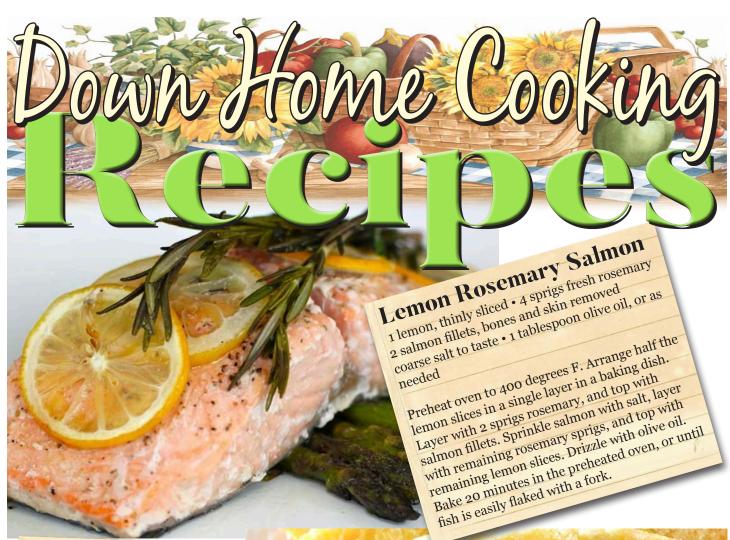






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Lavender Tea Bread

3/4 cup milk • 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh lavender 6 tablespoons butter, softened • 1 cup white sugar 2 eggs • 2 cups all-purpose flour • 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder • 1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Grease and flour a 9x5 inch loaf pan. Combine the milk and lavender in a small saucepan over medium heat. Heat to a simmer, then remove from heat, and allow to cool slightly. In a medium bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in the egg until the mixture is light and fluffy. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt; stir into the creamed mixture alternately with the milk and lavender until just blended. Pour into the prepared pan. Bake for 50 minutes in the preheated oven, or until a wooden pick inserted into the crown of the loaf comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a wire rack.





2 avocados - peeled, pitted, and cubed • 2 tomatoes, diced 1 small sweet onion, chopped • 1 pound cooked salad shrimp 1 pinch salt and pepper to taste • 2 tablespoons lime juice

Stir together avocados, tomatoes, onion, and shrimp in a large bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in lime juice. Serve cold.





Kiwi Strawberry Smoothie

1 banana • 6 strawberries • 1 kiwi • ½ cup vanilla frozen yogurt • ¾ cup pineapple and orange juice blend

Place the banana, strawberries, kiwi, vanilla frozen yogurt, and pineapple and orange juice blend in a blender. Blend until smooth.

Chicken Piccata with Angel Hair Pasta

1/3 cup all-purpose flour • 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper 1/4 teaspoon paprika • 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, pounded thin and cut into 2-inch pieces • 2 tablespoons olive oil • 1 clove garlic, minced • 1/4 cup butter, divided • 1 cup dry white wine • 1/3 cup chicken broth • 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice • 2 tablespoons capers • 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley • 1 (8 ounce) package angel hair pasta, cooked and drained

Whisk together flour, black pepper, and paprika in a shallow dish. Dredge the chicken pieces in the flour mixture, coating evenly; set aside. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat; stir and cook the garlic until light brown, about 1 minute. Remove the garlic from the skillet and set aside. Place 2 tablespoons of butter into the skillet with the olive oil. Cook the chicken pieces in the oil and butter over medium-high heat until brown, about 5 minutes per side. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside. Pour the wine into the hot skillet and bring to a boil over high heat, scraping the browned pieces from the bottom and sides of the pan. Boil the wine until it is reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Whisk in the chicken broth, reserved garlic, lemon juice and capers. Cook for 5 minutes over medium-high heat. Stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter and parsley. Return the chicken pieces to the skillet and continue cooking over medium heat until the sauce thickens, about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, fill a large pot with lightly salted water and bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Once the water is boiling, stir in the angel hair pasta, and return to a boil. Cook the pasta uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the pasta has cooked through, but is still firm to the bite, 4 to 5 minutes. Drain well. Remove the chicken pieces to a serving dish and drizzle with a few tablespoons of the sauce and capers. Place the cooked angel hair pasta into the skillet with the remaining piccata sauce and toss to coat.





Meat Pie

4 (9 inch) unbaked pie crusts • 2 pounds ricotta cheese • 6 eggs • 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, grated • 1 pound cooked ham, chopped • ½ pound Genoa salami, chopped • ¼ pound prosciutto, chopped • ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Place ricotta in a large mixing bowl and add eggs one at a time while mixing on low speed. Stir in mozzarella, ham, salami, and prosciutto until all ingredients are well combined. Line two 9 inch pans with pastry. Spoon half of mixture into each pan. Sprinkle half of the Parmesan cheese over each pie, then cover with top pastry. Crimp edges and cut steam vents in tops. Bake in preheated oven for 1 hour, until crust is golden brown. Cool on racks.

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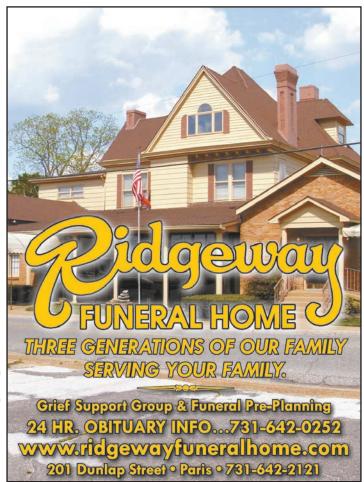
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When folks wish for a return to "normal" as the coronavirus pandemic slows down, they probably have no idea how "new" this "new normal" will be. All they have to do for inspiration, though, is to look to Erin, Tennessee.

In Erin, the bastion of all things Irish, they have combined the "new" and the "normal" to present the 58th annual Irish Days – in May!

While the event, customarily held on the third weekend in March, will have a "new" weekend this year of May 8-9, it will still have all of the "normal" components throughout the preceding weeks – Lord High Mayor Breakfast, pageants, carnival, demolition derby, vendors and, of course, the Parade, to name just a few.

may the road rise to meet you

Anyone who has ever participated in the Irish Parade will tell you that the road rises and falls along the lengthy parade route, and there will be plenty of places to safely watch the May 8 event that begins at Houston County Middle School on Main Street and ends near the hospital past the square.

According to Houston County Chamber of Commerce President Lisa Moore, postponing the event until May due to Covid-19 concerns may have some desirable consequences. "The weather should be nicer," she said, adding that the event has had to be postponed occasionally in the past due to inclement weather.

"It's still going to be the Irish celebration," she said, "even changing it to May."

She said some people had reservations about changing the date due to tradition, but "You can't please everybody. It's still going to be the Irish celebration, just a little later. It's better than canceling it. I think we'll be fine in May. We need to get back to everyday life."

Moore said that the theme of Irish Days is Happy 150th Birthday, Houston County! And there will be shirts and hats available with the 2021 logo: a tri-color shamrock (green for Erin, blue for Tennessee Ridge, and yellow for Yellow Creek).

Some groups still have their floats they had prepared for the event that was cancelled last year at the last minute, so she is anticipating good participation in the parade.

In addition, those pageant winners who never got the chance to ride in last year's parade are encouraged to ride in this year's event, along with this year's winners. 2020 Lord High Mayor, Robert Brown, will be this year's Grand Marshal. Of course, the 2021 Lord High Mayor will be there as well.

MAY THE WIND BE ALWAYS AT YOUR BACK

Ask any youngster what they like best about Irish Days, and he or she is likely to answer, "The carnival!" Casey's Rides has already committed to setting up from Tuesday, May 4 – Saturday, May 8. As usual, there will be a family day, armband day, etc., and those will be announced closer to time. Watch the Houston County Chamber of Commerce website and Facebook page for updates and a full schedule.

Those attending the carnival will surely want the wind at their backs - and so will the vendors who set up all around the square in Erin on Saturday.

Moore said that generally 130-150 vendors set up, but she is not sure how many will come as of yet, considering they are competing with the strawberry festival in Portland. But she is sure there will be plenty.

One vendor that is planning to return is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. In 2019, it was their first year of offering fish sandwiches and fries, and it went over very well. Organizers said it was fun to participate in the Irish festivities and they were anxious for 2021's event. Some vendors have been coming for years and wouldn't miss the event. One thing is for certain - groups, organizations, churches and others are sure to provide plenty of food, crafts and fun things to do on May 8 in Erin.

may you be in Heaven A HALF AN HOUR BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU Are, Dead!

The Lord High Mayor is very much alive, thank you, and this year's winner will be announced at the April 30 Lord High Mayor Breakfast, the kickoff to Irish week.

According to Moore, the Lord High Mayor must be a resident of Houston County for at least 10 years, be of good moral character, active in community affairs, practice service before self and have not been a Lord High Mayor previously.

Nominees for Lord High Mayor are submitted to the Irish Celebration Executive Board by the Houston County Chamber of Commerce, Houston County Rec Club, the Rotary Club, the Houston County Fair Board and the Lions Club. The Board makes the final decision.

He or she will ride in the May 8 parade in a place of honor befitting his or her status as the current year's Lord High Mayor. The Emerald Award Winners will be announced at the April 30 breakfast as well – a retinue of people who serve the community in various ways. All of those folks are definitely deserving of eventually being in heaven...well, you know the rest!

THE LUCK OF THE IRISH

Every participant in the Irish pageants, sponsored by the Rec Club and this year held on in early to mid-April, hope the luck of the Irish holds for them as they compete in their category. Folks from babies to mature citizens may participate, and it's just a fun time for all concerned.

Winners of the pageants get to ride in the parade, but you can't forget the other winners – community members who benefit from the proceeds of the pageants, such as ball teams as well as folks in need. No one makes money from these pageants just to feather their own nests; they invest the money back into the community by helping others. And that's the real luck of the Irish!

CELTIC MUSIC - AND maybe an INISH JIG OR TWO!

Central to Irish culture is music, and once again, the Chamber of Commerce has secured the Irish Trio to perform. A schedule for the performance can be found on the Houston **County Chamber of Commerce** website.

The Irish Banquet will be held on Friday, May 7. At press time, the location of the banquet is still under consideration; the Covid-19 numbers and the weather will determine whether this and other events will be held inside or outside.

is there a pot of GOLD At the end of the rainbow?

The jury is still out on that one, but there are definite economic impacts that Irish Days bring to the area, and those impacts were felt by not being able to have the event last year.

"I am not sure that the Fair Board and the Rec Club could go another year without the funds they raise at Irish Days," said Moore.

The Fair Board, which hosts the popular Demolition Derby and will finally be able to have their Beer Garden with green

beer, uses those funds to help put on the Houston County Fair in September.

It's a real old-timey county fair, with exhibits and show animals and competitions and much more that bring the county together and showcase the best it has to offer. It's very personal, very Houston County – not like the glitzy, impersonal fairs that are held in urban areas. This one is home. And the Rec Club – they help people in the community as well.

WHO KISSED THE BLARNEY STONE?

Certainly not Moore, who speaks truth with passion when she talks about the Irish celebration. "The most important thing about Irish Days is family and tradition," said Moore. "It's the time we get together. (Parade Day) is such a fun day that many families come in for it."

She said that a bonus this year is that it will be on Mother's Day weekend, when families traditionally "come home."

"You really don't miss it until it's gone," she said, speaking to the disappointment many felt when Irish Days was cancelled last year due to Covid-19. "This is the time when we celebrate Erin's Irish roots and history."

Moore said that sometimes they go into the local schools and talk about the area's Irish heritage. The children always respond enthusiastically, mentioning the parade, carnival and fun activities that take place annually.

"We will still have the feeling of Irish Days," Moore said. "If you are from here, or if you moved in, you can understand it and want it to come again.

two people shorten the road

Due to the pandemic, schedules are more fluid than in past years. However, you can be in the know and keep up with the planned activities by referring to the Houston County Chamber of Commerce website frequently.

They are still taking applications for vendors. In Irish circles, it is understood that two people shorten the road – a journey seems shorter when it is shared.

Organizers of the Irish celebration invite everyone to shorten the road by donning their green shirts and journeying to Erin April 30 – May 8 to share Irish heritage and culture, food and fun.

Be Irish in Erin!











